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**U.S. and Uzbekistan Cooperate on
Nonproliferation**
Agreement Protects Nuclear Materials and Technologies

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham signed an Implementing Agreement today with the Uzbek Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdulaziz Kamilov, to facilitate cooperation on nuclear nonproliferation between the United States and Uzbekistan. Secretary of State Colin Powell presided over the ceremony with Uzbek President Islam Karimov.

“This project is an excellent opportunity for the United States and Uzbekistan to work together to reduce the threat of terrorism and prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction,” Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham said. “It reinforces President Bush’s commitment to work with our partners in the region and take practical steps to improve the physical protection and accounting of nuclear materials and prevent illicit nuclear trafficking. This, in combination with our other nonproliferation initiatives, will improve the security environment in a way that has both regional and international benefits.”

The Implementing Agreement provides the groundwork for the execution of a June 2001 agreement to perform joint work on nuclear nonproliferation. As a result of the agreements, the United States will begin work to repatriate to Russia highly enriched uranium fuel from a research reactor in Uzbekistan. The Uzbekistan government in turn has pledged to convert the reactor to use low-enriched uranium, the more proliferation-resistant form of reactor fuel. The Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration will assist this conversion and aid Uzbekistan in the safe and secure storage of its nuclear materials.

This project furthers U.S. nonproliferation goals by increasing the security of nuclear materials in Central Asia and advancing the long-term U.S. goal of reducing the commercial use of highly enriched uranium fuel.

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